PROTECTING CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY:

IDENTITY AND THE CREATION

OF TRADITION IN THE

JAPANESE-CHILEAN

COMMUNITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the formation and portrayal of ethnic identity among Japanese people living in Chile, both first and subsequent generations. Through personal interviews and the analysis of academic work on the topic and magazine articles on Japan during the 2000s, this thesis attempts to elucidate what role underlying concepts such as ‘culture’ and ‘nation’ play in the construction of a Japanese-Chilean identity and portrayal. By looking at the elements that in recent decades have disrupted these stereotypes, including access to different aspects of Japan through the mass media, it analyses what this perceived threat to Japanese-Chileans’ arbitrage of cultural standards reveals about their long-held preconceptions of what constitutes Japaneseness and its relationships to Chilean social expectations.

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INTRODUCTION

Japanese people living in Chile and their descendants are facing one of the key questions of any immigrant community: what does it mean to be Japanese? And also, what is the 'real' Japan that they want to preserve and present to the Chilean public? The concepts associated with Japan in the Chilean media are confusing and sometimes contradictory, fluctuating constantly between the idea of these industrious, model citizens of an exotic country, and the rebellious, sexually ambiguous anime characters.

As an immigrant group that has historically lacked media coverage in Chile, the burden, or exclusiveness, of exposition and of presenting Japan has usually fallen on the immigrants themselves as they deal with the communities into which they are inserted. This, together with the geographical scattering of their population, has made it difficult to find a unified, coherent portrayal of Japanese culture to the Chilean public. The efforts of these individuals, those of Japanese organizations, and, finally, of both countries' governments tend to go in different, and sometimes even conflicting, directions.

This difference has created a rift between actors. As a way to see how individuals function in this crossroad of identities, I interviewed both Japan-born people living in Chile and descendants of the first wave of immigration in the early 1900s between the months of May and July of 2013. Throughout these conversations, it became evident that Japanese-Chileans are at a problematic point in their history. Feelings of frustration and anger at what is seen as misappropriation of their voice and the deprivation of the right to

define what is Japanese are constant, although not always directed at the same agents. Moreover, many of those interviewed were unaware of other attempts to shape a Japanese identity, and very few were active members of any organization.

I suggest that the clash of different views of what is 'culturally Japanese' stems from the fact that for decades, Japanese-Chileans had the exclusive authority to define what Japan was. Now that other sources, such as the internet and new waves of immigrants, have made other information available, the question of who is better qualified to define Japanese culture has emerged. The cultural barriers that defined the ethnic group have grown fragile, and there is a reticence to cede the power to discern the Japanese from the non-Japanese to new actors.

To investigate the topic, I have looked at publications on Japan in the weekly magazine *El Sabado* during the early 2000s, when most of the new information started coming into the country and certain events, such as the Anita Alvarado scandal, discussed in Chapter 3, prompted a revision of the image of Japan in Chilean eyes. While *El Sabado* is a conservative magazine that comes weekly as a supplement to the newspaper *El Mercurio*, given that the group that owns the newspaper is involved in a de facto duopoly of the press in the country,[1] it would be safe to assume that most Chileans obtain their news and reports from similar conservative sources.

Although scholarly work on the Chilean *nikkeijin*, or Japanese and Japanese descendants living abroad, is scarce, there have been at least four books on the topic published since 1990. Their approaches are generally that of oral history due to the lack of primary documents, and have been written in collaboration with Japanese-Chilean

[1] Gustavo Gonzalez-Rodriguez, "The Media in Chile: The restoration of democracy and the subsequent concentration of media ownership," in The Media in Latin America, ed. Jairo Lugo (Berkshire: McGraw - Hill Open Press, 2008), 61-77.

families and organizations such as the Sociedad Japonesa de Beneficencia, in the Santiago metropolitan region, and the Corporación Nikkei de Valparaiso, in the fifth region. Since most of the work focuses on bringing out the positive contributions of the *nikkei* in the formation of the Chilean nation and/or the good relations between the two governments, I believe them to be a good example of the ideal image that the contributors to the book wanted to portray, whether consciously or not.

My other sources of information were the Japanese-Chilean informants that I interviewed during my three-month stay in the country in 2013. Their own feelings about how they were being portrayed and represented by organized groups were as important as the rest of my documents, and served to illustrate the still-conflicted nature of the Japanese-Chilean identity. Their real names have been replaced to protect their anonymity.

I believe that this work will help shed light on the process of ethnic identity formation of Asian immigrants in Latin America, a topic that has been left aside in favor of others such as the formation of a uniform national entity, or criticism of the Chilean state in its treatment of its native population.[2] While this might not seem to be a wide-ranging approach, given the relative small size of the Japanese-Chilean population compared to other groups, a look into the assumptions made about Japan and about what makes a 'proper' Japanese person, and the efforts of the Japanese-Chileans themselves to dispel or strengthen certain stereotypes, can illustrate the process in other communities' contexts as well.

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[2] Jose Bengoa, "La cultura de la homogeneidad ha marginado a los indígenas," *Libro Libre Chile*, August, 2007, http://www.librolibrechile.cl/sitio/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27:josengoa--qla-cultura-de-la-homogeneidad-ha-marginado-a-los-indnasq&catid=19:plumas-libres&Itemid=32

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE JAPANESE-CHILEAN ETHNIC GROUP

When studying them, it is problematic to place Japanese-Chileans into the development of the Chilean nation or even into the structure of the Japanese diaspora, both historically and conceptually. Their small numbers and the lack of documentation to trace their route of migration still perplex authors who debate whether to even categorize them as an ethnic community.

The origin of the Japanese presence in Chile is not part of the government-supervised wave of migrations towards Latin America that was caused by the closing of the U.S. and its adjacent territories under the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 and the exclusion of the Immigration Act of 1924.[3] Those who decided to settle in Chile did so, in their majority, after being disappointed by the working conditions of contract agricultural labor in Peru. The impossibility of making the amount needed to go back to Japan and support their families would prompt them to look for new opportunities further south, in countries like Chile and Argentina.[4]

What makes the Chilean case noteworthy is not only the lack of scholarship on it, but the complex scenario deriving from that fact and from the geographical scattering of the Japanese population. Historians Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, in

[3] Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America.* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 34.
[4] Idem., 86.

their 2004 book *The Japanese in Latin America*, agree that the Japanese migrants of the southernmost countries are minor in comparison to those of Brazil and Peru. It can be argued that this is true both in terms of numbers and media presence. In their book, they include a map with the estimated Japanese population in each Latin American country by 1998, based on documentation from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The number of Japanese descendants living in Chile is said to have been in the broad range of between 1,000 and 10,000 people, with only Ecuador, Venezuela, and Uruguay showing less than that amount in South America.[5] Historian Baldomero Estrada, on his part, estimates the population of Japanese-Chileans to be about 4,000 people, while he also notes that the Corporacion Nikkei de Valparaiso, in a census conducted by themselves, was only able to confirm 1,614 people who self-identified as *nikkeijin* in the country.[6]

The small size of the group together with lack of a coherent narrative have been some of the factors in the slowness of the formation of a Japanese-Chilean community; most of them managed to establish themselves through personal connections to someone already working in Chile, and they scattered throughout the territory as labor demand deemed it. This does not mean that there have not been attempts to create institutions for Japanese-Chilean affairs. Although few, some Japanese cultural organizations date from the mid-twentieth century onwards and are still active, for example, the Instituto Cultural Chileno Japonés (f. 1940) and the Sociedad Japonesa de Beneficencia (f. 1954) both in Santiago de Chile, and the Corporación Nikkei de Valparaíso (f. 1992). However, participation in them is sporadic, and by no means do they encompass the majority of

[5] Ibid., 3.

[6] Baldomero Estrada, *Presencia Japonesa en la Region de Valparaiso: Un proceso de asimilación étnica y desarrollo agrícola* (Valparaíso: Ediciones Universitarias de Valparaíso de la Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, 1997), 23. All translations from Spanish by the author, unless otherwise stated.

Japanese-Chileans, as both academic research and my informants highlight. Of the eight interviewees I spoke to, only three of them had participated in any of these organizations' activities, and two of them only did so occasionally.

The so-called 'cultural assimilation'[7] of the *nikkeijin* to the Chilean social fabric is another element that has made the research scarce. In general, Chile has looked at assimilation as a desirable outcome of foreign population influx. The remnants of the country of origin's traditions, particularly if they are in any way perceived as opposed to European ones, have only recently been seen as much more than anecdotal.[8] Lately, the media has been interested in which customs have been kept inside these communities, and many times their members are eager to show their culture. However, there is not a consensus on what constitutes authentic Japanese culture in the same manner that there is uncertainty as to who belongs to the Chilean *nikkei* and who does not.

A new look at Chilean smaller ethnic communities, specifically the Japanese, prompted the publication of books looking at their history and current situation, among them *Japanese Presence in the Valparaiso Region: A Process of Ethnic Assimilation and Agricultural Development*,[9] by historian Baldomero Estrada, *On the other side of the Pacific: Japanese in Chile 1900-1960*[10] by Maria Teresa Ferrando Hanus, supported by the Sociedad Japonesa de Beneficencia and the Japanese consulate in Chile, and *Japanese in Chile: A Historical Anecdotes Collection- First Half of the XXth Century*[11]

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[7] Ibid., 55.

[8] See, for example, an account of the Indian presence in the northern city of Iquique, Ximena Torres Cautivo, "Una colonizacion postmoderna. Los hindues se toman Iquique," *El Sabado*, November, 1999, 25-30.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Maria Teresa Ferrando Hanus, *Al otro lado del Pacífico: Japoneses en Chile 1900-1960* (Santiago de Chile: Unknown Publisher, 2004)

[11] Ariel Takeda Mena, *Anecdotario Histórico-Japoneses Chilenos-Primera Mitad del Siglo XX* (Santiago de Chile: Unknown Publisher, 2006).

by Ariel Takeda Mena, a more private attempt by someone from the community itself to put together the stories of its members.

Japanese living in Chile, like their counterparts in other places of the world such as the United States, depend on the idea that they share practices among themselves and with those still living in Japan. Likewise, all these titles are written with the notion that there is, indeed, such a group of people as the Japanese-Chilean and that they have enough in common to merit being considered a unity of sorts despite their personal differences. This idea of culture is rooted in the existence of Japan as a nation-state, but it also depends on the notion that a unified Japanese nation predates and is larger than that of the political entity of Japan.

Benedict Anderson defines the modern nation as "an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[12] He further explains this definition by indicating that the nation is "*limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations."[13] However, when talking about diasporas, this 'elasticity' that the author talks about becomes overstretched, debated, and the boundaries are defined differently depending on the individual's standpoint. In the case of the *nikkeijin*, the definition of these boundaries become all the more important as they depend on the idea of a shared culture and lack the geographical enclosing of the homeland. Through the decades, certain ideas have been attached to what it constitutes to be Japanese, and some practices are identified with the home country in detriment of others.

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[12] Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 6.
[13] Ibid.,7.

How this process occurs is usually a combination of pressures from external agents, who perceive the members of the group as different from the rest of society, and of selections, both conscious and unconscious, by those belonging to the group as to what binds them. Sociologist J. Milton Yinger identifies three elements of an ethnic group,

> The group is perceived by others in the society to be different in some combination of the following traits: language, religion, race, and the ancestral homeland with its related culture; (2) the members also perceive themselves as different; and (3) they participate in shared activities built around their (real or mythical) common origin and culture.[14]

To this, sociologist Miri Song in the book *Choosing Ethnic Identity* adds that "ethnic groups are real in to the extent that they are socially and politically recognized and constructed by their members and by their wider society. An ethnic group exists only where its members possess a conscious sense of belonging to it. In this way, ethnic groups don't exist outside a politicized process of (self-) recognition."[15]

Yet there is uncertainty as to whether Japanese-Chileans merit such designations as 'ethnic group' or 'community'. For example, Takeda Mena starts his book's introduction by writing,

> The mistakenly called Chilean *nikkei* colony structured itself in the midst of total destitution. It is one of those human conglomerates that emerge spontaneously, without paternity or name, without a specific place to settle, without external support or recognition, without even the intention of becoming something specific and long lasting.[16]

Commenting on this stance, Viviana Arostica Paez in her article *A Silent Process of Acculturation. Testimonies of Japanese Women Immigrants in Chile 1950-2010,* agrees with Takeda Mena in that "talking about a 'community' to describe the *nikkei* and

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[14] Yinger, Milton J., *Ethnicity. Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 4.
[15] Miri Song, *Choosing Ethnic Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 44
[16] Takeda Mena, *Anecdotario Histórico-Japoneses Chilenos-Primera Mitad del Siglo XX*, 8.

Japanese population in Chile is a conceptual error."[17] However, neither Arostica Paez nor Takeda Mena point to what definition of 'ethnic group' or 'community' they are working with. In the case of the former, the migration did not stem from an official program and developed without formal acknowledgement from the Japanese government, thus not being a 'colony', but this is not addressed by Arostica Paez.

For the purpose of this research, I will argue that there is a Japanese-Chilean ethnic group and community by following Yinger's characteristics, although with some restrictions and at a much smaller scale than similar groups have in other countries. According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, a community can be defined as "a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society."[18] Although they are scattered in different areas of Chile, Japanese-Chileans believe they share characteristics and interests among themselves, and are believed to do so by outsiders as well.

While it is true that Japanese-Chileans only sporadically participate in politically-recognized associations such as the Sociedad Japonesa de Beneficencia or the Corporación Nikkei Region de Valparaiso, they appear to possess a sense of ethnic community that goes further than any actual interactions between the members. Both in the literature and the interviews I conducted, individuals point to an abstract sense of community and a presumption that others share their ethnicity, regardless of how many generations removed from the original immigrant to the country they are. There is a

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[17]Mag. Viviana Arostica Paez, "Un Silencioso Proceso de Aculturación, Inmigrantes Japonesas en Chile, 1950-2010," *Estudios Hemisféricos y Polares* 4, no 1 (2013): 2 http://www.hemisfericosypolares.cl/articulos/043-Arostica-Aculturacion%20inmigrantes%20japonesas%20Chile.pdf

[18] *Merriam-Webster*, online ed., s,v, "community." http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community

vague idea that there is a group consisting of Japanese-Chileans, although many have not met any others apart from their direct family members.

I suggest that Japanese immigrants to Chile are a community in that there is an imagined sense of union and expectations of common characteristics. Although they seldom share activities, and even many of those who know each other will not meet often, there is the perception that they form some type of community.

However, their reactions to challenges to their identity are not faced so much as a unified group as they are by individuals. It is their personal reaction to changing notions of Japan and ethnic and racialized identities in general that have shaped the image of Japanese people in Chile, but the common points in their discourses suggest that there are wide-spread ideas of their identity across the community.

Following Yinger's classifications of ethnic identifications, even as he points out that they are fluid, Japanese-Chileans' current ethnicity would be classified as Symbolic.[19] The reasoning behind this classification is that they are perceived by both themselves and others as being ethnically distinct; however, they do not participate in shared activities. This does not make their identification any less valid, and allows working with them inside the frame of ethnicity and ethnic groups at least according to this author.

Moreover, as Yinger points out, there is a notion that the Japanese come from a similar background that should give them similar looks on life, family, and society, regardless of what circumstances they were raised with. I suggest that their ambiguous official situation as an ethnic group is the one that allowed them the freedom to define themselves and create a particular narrative of their formation as a community and as

[19] Yinger, *Ethnicity. Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?*, 4.

individuals in a manner that might not have been possible under the structure of a single cultural organization, or under strict scrutiny from either of the two governments. It is their capacity to dictate what authentic Japanese culture is that is at stake when their definitions are challenged by outsiders and insiders alike.

According to Marilyn Ivy, the level of cultural anxiety is particularly high in Japan as its rapid industrialization has prompted them to assimilate 'modernity' and Western practices. Their growing economic presence in the world also brings more pressure to the need to define what makes them unique as a country and what aspects of the nation are 'traditional' (Japanese) and which are 'modern' (foreign). The intricate connections between the construction of the 'cultural,' the nation-state, and industrialization are at the core of Ivy's argument on the efforts to preserve arbitrarily chosen expressions as being exemplary Japanese. She writes,

> European and American attempts to place Japan as unassimilably alter and Japanese attempts to live up to— to assert— its difference cannot thus be easily dissociated, despite numerous efforts to maintain the distinction between the two geohistorical unities. The efforts to sustain that difference have never been without remainders, losses, and violences, not only within the "island nation" but outside: violences enacted not only on Japanese but by them. The hybrid realities of Japan today— of multiple border crossings and transnational inter changes in the worlds of trade, aesthetics, science— are contained within dominant discourses on cultural purity and nondifference, and in nostalgic appeals to premodernity: what makes the Japanese so different from everyone else makes them identical to each other; what threatens that self-sameness is often marked temporally as the intrusively modern, spatially as the foreign.[20]

As Ivy points out, the differentiation of Japan from the rest of the world also supposes the homogeneity of Japan itself, erasing ethnical, age, or gender differences inside the nation. In the case of the Japanese diaspora, insistence on this uniqueness furthers the idea that Japanese immigrants are, and will remain, essentially different from

[20] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 9.

the country that they settle in. The origin of these distinctions is not often questioned, as it is believed to be natural.

Added to the task of defining their country of origin, Japanese-Chileans must also define themselves as immigrants, and as Japanese immigrants in particular. Given the relative reticence with which countries take on immigrants, worrying about the impact on cultural norms and on labor demand, it has to be done in a way that assuages suspicions and present them as positive contributors to Chilean national development. The 'authentically Japanese' characteristics that they highlight must not only be appreciated in a Japanese setting, but in Chilean labor markets and in the overall development goal of the country. These would possibly set up the basis of an ethnic identity in the country.

SELF-PERCEPTION AND PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE JAPANESE IMMIGRANT

An article from *El Sabado*, published on November 4th, 2000, was titled *Kamikaze Pilots. To break into a million pieces*, as a reference to a quote from Admiral Takijiro Onishi. It was part of a series on famous suicides, written by Chilean novelist Jaime Collyer. With undergraduate training in Psychology and a Masters in Developmental Sociology, the award-winning author does not specialize in Japanese society or history, and as the article is part of a series, he was most likely chosen for the aesthetic and literary appeal of suicide, and that is the position from which he writes. This article shows what an educated, though not specialized, look at Japan and Asia was at the time. His attempt to understand the phenomenon of suicide attacks in the Japanese context relied heavily on the idea of an Asian mindset that differs from the Western one. He writes,

> There is an unequivocally poetic mood to the kamikaze phenomenon, in the stage that gave cause to it, in the social environment that encouraged it. And there is also a lot of the old oriental mysticism, of the beliefs and traditions that were born thousands of years ago in Southeast Asia.[21]

He also points out that the origin of this warrior mentality in Japan can be found in the *Bushido* code, though he does not cite a source. He explains that there is an "old

[21] Jaime Collyer, "Pilotos Kamikaze. Romperse en Mil Pedazos," *El Sabado*, November 2000, 40. Collyer does not specify what he is referring to by talking about a Southeast Asian mysticism, and both conceptually and geographically, I am dubious as to which religion he could be pointing, if any.

oriental premise of first giving up one's life rather than territory."[22] What he has based himself to interpret it in such a phrase is not explicit in the text, and his association of all Japanese society to a code belonging only to the warrior elite is an interesting assumption.

While the topic of the *kamikaze* is not one that is mentioned in scholarly work on Japanese-Chileans, perhaps due to its negative connotations, there is the idea that Japan, particularly its men, has a cultural inclination towards loyalty, endurance, and hard-work, which was transmitted to the efforts of the Japanese immigrants in Chile.

For example, Chilean historian Baldomero Estrada, in 1997, did a short study on the Japanese that had settled in Valparaiso and the surrounding areas and worked in agriculture, particularly in floriculture, titled *Japanese Presence in the Valparaiso Region: A Process of Ethnic Assimilation and Agricultural Development*. He explains that the work "intends to show the importance that Japanese presence has had in our region. Despite its scarce representation in contrast with other foreign collectivities, it is interesting to observe how a small immigrant group managed to do a work that puts in evidence a significant contribution to Chile's development."[23] Estrada is a specialist in immigration history to the Valparaiso region, but he admits that Japanese society is not among his specialties. Therefore, most of his work relies on the oral accounts of the Japanese-Chileans, and there are several conclusions that he draws from their behavior but cannot access it entirely, thus furthering the idea that the Japanese psyche is entirely different from the European, and therefore Chilean, one. He writes,

> The example of the Japanese through their evolution has shown us much more than material accomplishments. Behind their administration, there has been a testimony to a cultural character of which we, westerners, can only know the exterior. In our approximation, we could observe that the Japanese person's

[22] Ibid.,42.
[23] Estrada, *Presencia Japonesa en la Region de Valparaiso,* 11.

> concept of work is different to ours, but we could not necessarily comprehend its meaning, because fully understanding its cultural context is prohibited to us.[24]

He goes on to add that their presence "has been a positive example of assimilation through three generations, and that in their work has given us an important testimony of their tenacity, industry, and preciseness that expresses that particular concept they have of duty, of 'doing things properly.'"[25]

This is a theme that is echoed by other works. In 2006, Takeda Mena published *Japanese in Chile: A Historical Anecdotes Collection-First Half of the XXth Century.*[26] In his introduction, he explains that he is not a historian, but that the work was done as part of his own look for identity as a Chilean *nikkeijin.*[27]

His overview of the situation of the Japanese-Chilean during World War II also continues this narrative of their resilient, industrious spirit. While Chile did not send its Japanese population to internment camps, the government did relocate some of their most prominent members in smaller cities and towns, where they had to follow a strict policy of daily signatures at the local police office.[28] The lack of a rebellious response from any of them, at least in the accounts given by Takeda, furthers the idea that the Japanese were patient, sensible, and obedient citizens to the Chilean government, an image that at the time was an important contrast to that of the nationalistic, emperor-worshipping Japanese of war propaganda.

In 2004, as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Sociedad Japonesa de Beneficencia, Maria Teresa Ferrando Hanus published *On the*

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[24] Ibid.,57.
[25] Ibid., 57.
[26] Takeda Mena, *Anecdotario Histórico-Japoneses Chilenos-Primera Mitad del Siglo XX*, 1.
[27] Ibid., 1.
[28] Ibid., 254.

Other Side of the Pacific: Japanese in Chile 1900-1960. Of the Spanish-language books that I consulted, Ferrando's is the only one that explicitly addresses the construction of an 'ideal homeland'[29] by various diaspora communities. However, this reflection is not extended to her later description of their lives in Chile, and it stands as a sort of warning for the rest of her book. Furthermore, while she acknowledges the possibility that images of the homeland may become distorted, she does not overtly point out that the personality traits and the anecdotes of the individuals she writes about might also be shaped by the notion of what constitutes a 'good Japanese person' and 'Japanese values.'

Ferrando's work is full of short anecdotes about these people that she was able to collect from their families and friends. She tries to write at least one fact for each individual she mentions, even if there is little information on them, to bring them closer to the reader. The characteristics used to describe them tend to follow a similar pattern of what Estrada had previously described as Japanese values and concepts. For example, in her short mention of an immigrant to the city of Iquique in the 1920s, Tadao Nakagawa, she writes that "justice, honesty, and respect -particularly respect towards the wisdom of elders- were very important values to him."[30]

The other feature that she highlights is the willingness of the Japanese to integrate into Chilean society and their tireless efforts despite linguistic and cultural obstacles. For example, about Minoru Sakuda, immigrant to the city of Antofagasta in 1921, she explains that "he was a very cultured and sociable man, who could make relationships easily, and was fluent in Spanish, English, and Chinese. He was a great reader and had

[29] Ferrando Hanus, *Al otro lado del Pacífico*, 65.
[30] Ibid., 125.

very good memory."[31] These characteristics not only highlight his good disposition that is associated to him being Japanese, but also a high educational level, particularly the knowledge of Chinese, representing high culture. Similarly, Suehiko (Alberto) Hayashida, is remembered by his daughter Lucia,

> As a Japanese person descending from a family of samurai, he deeply loved and longed for his home country, and felt very proud of his ancestors, feelings that he passed onto his descendants at a time in which being Japanese was not well-thought of. (...) My father never raised his tone and was always polite and kind.[32]

The mention of a samurai lineage is a common theme in these accounts. Similarly, when I spoke to Ayako, a fourth generation Japanese-Chilean in her early 20s, she also conveyed to me that her grandmother is certain that her father was of a samurai family. In the case of Ayako's family, this claim was said to be supported by the existence of a *katana* (sword) that her great grandfather had brought from Japan with him, but it was stolen from one of the family's houses.[33] How this family, or others that say they have samurai ancestors, came to fall into such a state that they had to leave Japan and take occupations such as hairdressing is not known by their descendants, and tends to be a part of their story that is ignored.

Ferrando narrates everyday scenes from the life of Takuichi (Juan) Sakurada, who settled in the northern city of Iquique with a successful hair salon. It includes the anecdote of Sakurada's love of Chilean music and the way he would sing to their lyrics, for which the author transcribed his flawed pronunciation of the letter 'l'. This section is followed by the assertion that "his friends and acquaintances greatly appreciated him due

[31] Ibid., 143.
[32] Ibid., 140.
[33] Oral interview with the author, June, 2013.

to his cordiality, his sensitivity, and his optimistic cheerfulness."[34]

On one hand, it is important to take into consideration that this apparent mocking of Sakurada's accent might not be as offensive in the Chilean setting as in others, since Chilean people tend to bring up physical characteristics and use them as fond nicknames for each other. On the other hand, that the author would choose to counteract their effect by pointing out Sakurada's good disposition and his standing in the community can be an attempt to both demonstrate that his love for Chile was so deep that he would rejoice in the local culture regardless of his language impediments, and that his good-humored nature made him take no offense if his mispronunciation was brought up by his acquaintances.

Again, the hard-working, always polite image of the Japanese man shines through this anecdote. This image, however, is not reserved to this particular book and to the sources that the author consulted. There is good reason to believe that many of these ideas on the nature of the Japanese personality remain in place today, even as new and more problematic images have begun to enter the scene. When I asked interviewees if they had ever been treated in a particular way due to them being Japanese, their answers showed that it was assumed by Chileans that they possessed positive qualities such as honesty and hard-work.

For example, Reiko, a middle-aged Japanese woman who had come to Chile in the early 1990s to teach Japanese, said in our interview that she had been very surprised at how she was treated differently from Chilean people. In her first year in Chile, her landlady had told her she did not need a deposit from her, although she was aware it was standard policy with other tenants. She explained that the landlady had said "you are

[34] Ferrando Hanus, *Al otro lado del Pacífico: Japoneses en Chile 1900-1960*, 128.

Japanese. Japanese people always pay."[35]

Similarly Makoto, who is the son of a Japanese diplomat and a Chilean woman and is in his 30s, explained to me that as Chileans perceive more differences between all the Asian nations, there have been stereotypes associated with Japan in particular. For example, he said that he is always expected to be smart and very polite by people he has just met, and that he is perceived as honest.[36]

On the other hand, Megumi, a Japanese woman in her 60s who arrived at Chile in the 1990s as part of a company and is currently a Japanese language teacher, says she has not perceived too much of a special treatment, although she does admit that she is treated with more respect than others and she attributes this to her position as a teacher.[37] Asami, who is a teacher in her 20s and recently arrived from Japan when she married a Chilean, said that she has not felt any different treatment aside from being perceived as a foreigner because of her lack of Spanish fluency.[38]

From the texts and the interviews, it can be inferred that certain characteristics are associated with being Japanese and that they have been present for decades. Although it cannot be proved in the case of oral history, there are common occurrences that depict it. It is this repetitive narrative that brings all these stories together despite their particularities. In most of them, the Japanese man has come from a previous location in Latin America searching for better opportunities. The notion of failure in his attempts to settle in whichever place he came to first, be it Peru or another nearby country, is usually outshined by the idea of an industrious worker who, through much sacrifice, came to

[35] Oral interview with the author, May, 2013.
[36] Oral interview with the author, June, 2013.
[37] Oral interview with the author, May, 2013.
[38] Oral interview with the author, May, 2013.

succeed in Chile and to love their new country while never forgetting their origins.

According to Takeda Mena, these immigrants' goals were not to acquire significant wealth or to acquire a high position in Chilean society. This assertion somewhat follows what others authors, such as Masterson and Funada-Classen, indicate about Japanese people not originally having the goal to reside permanently in Latin America. According to their research, their intention was to alleviate their financial struggle and come back with enough funds from their enterprises abroad to continue their lives in Japan in a better situation than when they left.

Takeda Mena explains that, had they been financially successful, "it would have only meant that the number of Japanese people anchored in Chile would be less, because after reaching their goals with relative ease, most of them would have returned home."[39] While he also points out that, if only looking at a financial perspective, the *nikkeijin*'s journey could be evaluated as a failure, he again cites a cultural difference to assuage this statement, saying that "none of them came after 'riches' in a Western sense."[40] In his opinion, what changed their mind to staying in Chile was the fact that many started to form families, not necessarily the lack of funds to go back, though he does allude to it.

The idea that the Japanese own different concepts of labor and responsibility can be positive if taken in the context of how Chilean people see themselves as workers. In 2007, the Fundacion Futuro, an organization founded in 1993 and whose stated purpose is to bring culture and democracy to the Chilean population through public service programs, did a study that revealed that 55.5% of those interviewed believed that

[39] Takeda Mena, *Anecdotario Histórico-Japoneses Chilenos-Primera Mitad del Siglo XX*, 333.
[40] Idem., 333.

Chileans were lazy, as in opposition to hard-working.[41] Similarly, 76% expressed that Chileans were much more prone to be liars than to be honest people.[42] In this situation, and if employers and clients alike share this view, a Japanese employee could be deemed much worthier than his or her Chilean counterpart, and much less of a risk. In this manner, ideas that were shared by those external to the group have been reproduced inside it as well, and might have become a beneficial stereotype and a source of capital for those intending to thrive in Chilean society.

Moreover, their projected characteristic of humbleness and social harmony has allowed them to, as a collectivity, remain unidentified with any political faction.[43] This is an important asset to possess in Chile, particularly during tumultuous political times such as the Second World War and those of the Government Junta and Augusto Pinochet's military regime (1973-1990), during which the Japanese were not associated with any of the sides of the conflict in particular.

[41]Fundación Futuro, "Estudio de Opinión Pública. Orgullo y Chilenidad," Banco de Encuestas, September, 2007, 9 www.fundacionfuturo.cl
[42] Ibid.,11.
[43] With exceptions such as Japanese descendant Carlos Ominami, a state minister during Patricio Alwyn's government during Chile's return to democracy, and member for many years of left wing, anti-Pinochet parties. His own ideology, however, is not associated with Japanese-Chileans as a whole.

CONTESTING IMAGES AND JAPANESE PROPRIETY

The aforementioned ideas of what Japanese are like have been challenged by events that prompted national, and international, attention. In the 1990s, the story of a Chilean woman's life in the Japanese sex trade slightly modified the image of the Japanese citizen. Anita Alvarado Muñoz (b. 1972) was a Chilean woman who moved to Japan during the 1990s to work as a hostess and occasional prostitute in various *snack* establishments. Her story became widely known in both Japan and Chile due to her husband Yuji Chida's embezzlement of funds at his job at the Aomori Prefectural Housing Supply Public Corp., much of which were sent to Alvarado in Chile and quickly spent. According to her, this was done while remaining ignorant of the origins of the money.

This case brought immediate attention in Chile to the Japanese underworld of the *yakuza*, hostess bars, and human trafficking, overall sordid topics that had not been part of the mainstream interest in Japan, which had been led towards scientific and economical development by both governments. The Japanese and Chilean presses nicknamed her 'the Chilean geisha' even though most articles that called her such would give some sort of disclaimer explaining that geisha were highly educated and talented women, and should be taken differently from hostesses or prostitutes.

There were soon widespread rumors, corroborated by investigative journalists, that Latin American women were particularly prized commodities in the Japanese sex

trade. This notion came from assumptions on Japanese men and women's behavior, and what made them different from those of Latin American women.

In an article published by *El Sabado* on November 2nd, 2001, titled *Geishas, Chilean Style. What is Behind the Case of Anita Alvarado*, the author explained the appeal of *snack* bars to the Japanese *salaryman*. Paraphrasing some of his interviewees, including Cristina Uchimura, a Chilean woman married to a Japanese diplomat and the current president of the Asociación Nikkei de la Region de Valparaiso, he writes that "the Japanese man is sexist. He is a workaholic. He would rather take a stroll through these bars than come home. All of this is said about the salary man, the Japanese executive that goes out of his way for his job and finds well-deserved relaxation at hostess bars, to which entrance to women is not forbidden."[44] The idea that the Japanese man is some sort of sexist, inhibited creature who finds outlets in this underground world of women whose sole purpose is to serve him is prevalent in the article, which makes several allusions to relationships between older Japanese men and young hostesses as a distorted form of a father-daughter interaction.[45] It is not clear what prompted her to make that comparison, or if she meant it in a sexualized way or she was referring to gift and monetary exchanges. In either case, I would argue that this form of interaction is present in the sexual trade in various countries and is not necessarily a unique characteristic of the Japanese one.

The article states that Japanese men look for submissiveness in women, but at the same time for a certain outgoingness that the Japanese woman allegedly lacks. Luis Diaz, a journalist that lived in Japan for many years, adds that foreign hostesses are expected to be able to utter some words in Japanese, "(...) but only a little bit, because up to some

[44] Marcela Escobar, "Geishas a la Chilena. Lo que hay detrás del caso de Anita Alvarado," *El Sábado*, January 2002, 24-25.
[45] Ibid., 25.

point it is nice that they speak like a dumb girl. Many Japanese men like not particularly bright women. They say *kawai* (sic), which means pretty, nice, the typical prototype of a woman to the Japanese."[46]

A small section on the real Japanese geisha in the same article describes their preparation and their elaborate look, depicting it as something uniquely Japanese in its appeal. "The exquisite way in which they do their makeup requires special attention to highlighting the woman's neck and nape, areas that are highly sensual to the Japanese man."[47] That the neck is not taken as a sensual body part by Western cultures as well is debatable, and assertions such as this extends the idea that far eastern cultures and people work with an entirely different set of standards than their Western counterparts. While some of the articles' interviewees worried about the distorted image that the Japanese would receive of Chile, the distortion of long-established images went both ways, and Japan, already suspected of being deviant due to some of the cartoons that had been shown in Chilean public television, became a land of fantasy and carnal pleasure.

While the story of Anita Alvarado does cast a shadow on the image of Japanese people as model citizens, it affects more negatively the perception of men than that of women, as the latter are perceived to be passive objects of desire of the Japanese male. In the same article, the author describes an interaction between a husband and wife:

> It was a matter of habit. If the Japanese husband wishes to go drinking at a hostess bar, he has to tell his wife that he needs some yen for something, that something unexpected has came up, that it is to buy some special magazine that he needs, or to invite some foreign friend that wants a sightseeing tour of the city. And the Japanese woman, being submissive herself, smiles half-heartedly and gives him the money, knowing that it will end up in another woman's pocket.[48]

[46] *Kawaii* can be translated as 'adorable', 'cute', or 'charming'. Ibid., 25.
[47] Ibid., 24.
[48] Ibid., 26.

It is unclear whether the author has any personal knowledge of Japanese marital interactions or if this is entirely based on accounts of people who had lived in the country.

The outrage at the disrespectful and wrongful use of the term geisha to describe Anita Alvarado's reputation grew with the increasing interest of tabloids in her story and with her accounts of Japanese society. While some such as Gustavo Ponce, former Chilean ambassador to Japan, believed her to have a privileged insight of what the Japanese are like below their proper, polite surface, others considered her to be an uneducated and offensive source, an impostor taking over the authority to speak on behalf of the Japanese community and given such opportunity by gossip-mongering tabloids.[49]

Through a letter to the magazine it can be seen that this portrayal of the Japanese woman affected some readers. One expressed his support for Anita Alvarado, and celebrated the fact that she was not a proper geisha, saying that "she lacks their most important characteristic: submissiveness."[50]

In an interview with *Paula* magazine, a bi-monthly publication catering to women that has been running since 1967, she made several assertions about Japanese men and women that were left undisputed by the interviewer, either as a strategy or because she was ignorant of Japanese society herself, and it reflects some of the ideas that she spread about Japanese men's most intimate desires during the time of major media coverage. When asked about whether hostesses would have been something akin to a 'postmodern geisha,' she replied:

> No, if I were a geisha, I would be the most expensive whore of all. They study since they are thirteen years old to make the man happy, to pamper him, to never oppose him, to walk always behind him. Hey, I am not going to make some idiot

[49] Ibid., 26.
[50] R. Maureira, "Memorias de un geisha," *El Sabado,* March, 2002, 15.

happy if I don't feel like it.[51]

To that, she added that geisha were "very few, very expensive, and, in my opinion, ugly,"[52] and that the woman that these men were accustomed to dealing with at home was "the cold Japanese woman, always covered, very serious."[53]

When talking to Japanese-Chileans about their reaction to Alvarado, most accounts do not question her image of the Japanese woman as much as they reflect the offense taken by misuse of the term geisha and the bad image that she gave of Chileans in Japan. For example, Ayako let me know that it was one of the events that had upset her grandmother the most. She was coming back from living in the United States when the Anita Alvarado scandal broke out, and Ayako remembers her outrage at the representation of geisha as prostitutes and the association of this woman to an occupation that she believed to be an important part of Japanese artistic culture.

On another account, Makoto mentioned to me that, when living in Japan, he had received some comments, said in a joking manner, such as "Oh, so you are Chilean? You must be Anita's son!" and that, for a long time, it was the prevalent story that the Japanese associated with Chile.[54] At least three of my female interviewees, when asked about what they thought the image of Chile in Japan was, said that it was the Anita Alvarado story. Both Makoto and these women's accounts were said in a light-hearted manner, mixed with laughter, and so it seems that this unwanted attention to Japan was received negatively mostly by older generations that had not been in the country itself for long period of time, if ever.

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[51] Andrea Lagos, "La Geisha Chilena. Soy Anita Alvarado y Punto," *Paula*, April 2012, http://www.paula.cl/entrevista/soy-anita-alvarado-y-punto/
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Oral interview with the author, June, 2013.

In none of the conversations I had with informants, or in the articles from *El Sabado* that I consulted, was the issue of the geisha approached with any questioning of the place of women in such an occupation, or the notion of gender that stemmed from it. Although later in 2003 Anita Alvarado would be investigated under charges of human trafficking, the original outrage did not come from this possibility either.

What really seemed to upset the majority of the Japanese-Chilean community was not that Japan's world of female entertainers of different kinds had been brought up, but that the geisha, a practice believed to be authentic Japanese high culture, could in any way be put at a similar level with hostess clubs, which represents cheap, low-level entertainment.

Moreover, the fact that it was an uneducated and, in their opinion, disrespectful Chilean woman who prompted the breach and confusion of higher and lower cultural forms upset them and robbed them their own power to discern what to include in their narrative on Japan and, ultimately, on themselves.

It is interesting to note how female behavior was one of the main markers of authentic Japanese culture and attitude, and that characteristics such as submissiveness, delicacy, and obedience were present and not contested in my interviews as much as in the depiction of Japanese female behavior during the Anita Alvarado coverage.

One of my youngest interviewees, Ayako, whose connection to Japan is through a paternal great-grandfather, brought up one interesting characteristic that stands out as Japanese according to Chilean standards. When asked if she had ever felt any kind of cultural struggle due to being a Japanese descendant, she said that one thing that differentiated her from her peers was the way she acted when she had men as guests. She

explained that her grandmother had always taught her that it was her duty to serve food to the men, and to make them feel as comfortable as possible. This idea also manifested itself in the fact that she felt that the kitchen was a woman's domain, and she said that it bothered her when men entered it, taking it as a violation of her space. Her grandmother and Ayako herself had taken this particular practice as something that was 'uniquely' Japanese, and decided that it was worth preserving.

However, one has to wonder: would Japanese women of the interviewee's generation recognize this as a Japanese practice? While it certainly might have reflected one Japanese practice of a particular time period, it could also be taken as a world-wide gender role of the beginning of the twentieth century. That her grandmother and she would choose, maybe unconsciously, to preserve it as a marker of their Japanese identity is a choice that reflects what they intensely believe a Japanese woman should act like.

In her study of Japanese female immigrants to Chile, Arostica Paez finds that the issue of identity and the losing of Japanese characteristics weighs heavily on the minds of Japanese-Chilean women. She states that "the conclusion to which the immigrants came is that, expecting to arrive to a society where being different could isolate them, Chilean interest in knowing them or their own shyness that made them appear similar to them, allowed them to develop family and work lives, and to accept that within their particularity as foreigners- of which they are proud due to their Japanese heritage- they could develop new experiences, even to the point of discarding the melancholy of what had been lost in favor of the acquired knowledge."[55]

While not as overt as Ayako's testimony, I received similar answers from other women. In the case of those who were born in Japan but had lived most of their adult

[55] Arostica Paez, "Un Silencioso Proceso de Aculturación," 27

lives in Chile, when asked if they felt Japanese, Chilean, or a mixture of both, many agreed that, even if they identified as Japanese, they were not totally Japanese anymore.

To this question, Megumi answered that she feels that she has lost a part of her Japanese identity as she has lived away from the country for so long. She says that she experiences this both in the way she thinks and the way she conducts herself, though she did not specify what made them different from other Japanese people. Finally, she admitted that she felt as if she were "either losing, or putting away, a part of being Japanese, though it does not make me any closer to being Chilean."[56] In her case, her differences are highlighted by the fact that she does not feel as if she belongs entirely to either of the two countries.

Reiko explained that when she travels back to Japan, she feels the difference. She highlighted the fact that, unlike proper Japanese women, she addressed people directly. While she said this in Spanish, and thus did not specify how it worked in Japanese, one can assume that it can refer to the use of personal pronouns, which is unusual in Japanese. It can also refer to the way in which topics are approached in Japan.[57]

Kyoko, another middle-aged Japanese teacher who arrived to Chile in the late 1980s after she married a Chilean man, did admit that she still identifies as Japanese, but that she wonders whether her mentality has not changed from that of a Japanese still living in Japan.[58]

This falls in line with prevalent ideas of Japanese thought and behavior for most of the twentieth century. Anthropologist Takie Sugiyama Lebra in her 1976 work *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* characterizes this as "the priority that the Japanese attach

[56] Oral interview with the author, May, 2013.
[57] Oral interview with the author, May, 2013.
[58] Oral interview with the author, May, 2013.

to implicit, nonverbal communication, over an explicit, verbal, rational exchange of information."[59] She adds that "the Japanese believe that only an insensitive, uncouth person needs a direct, verbal, complete message," [60] equating it with both a lack of brightness and of manners. Whether this holds true or not, it seems to be agreed upon by Japanese women living in Chile.

This could be the reason that there have been no efforts to challenge the image of Japanese women in the media in the same manner that there has been to separate the image of the geisha from that of the prostitute. While this is an issue of confusing something that is a lower form of entertainment with high class, 'authentic' Japanese culture, women behaving modestly, and ideas on what being modest is, are still very much associated with elegance and the Japanese way of being. For Japanese women living abroad, it acquires even more importance, as it differentiates them from their Chilean counterparts, but also makes them feel as outsiders from traditional, educated Japanese society.

[59] Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), 46
[60] Ibid., 47

PRESERVATION OF JAPANESE HIGH CULTURE OVER POPULAR CULTURE

Another issue that is controversial to Japanese-Chileans, and, to some of them, even insulting, is the extent to which anime (Japanese animation), manga (Japanese comic books), and other forms of popular culture can distort 'authentic' Japanese culture to the public. Beginning in the late 1990s, Japanese anime became increasingly popular on Chilean public television, with shows such as 'Sailor Moon', 'Dragon Ball', and 'Ranma ½' being broadcasted for children after coming home from school, which caused a controversy because some of these shows were not intended for such young audiences.[61] While it was originally promoted by entirely Chilean fan groups, Japanese cultural institutions slowly began to incorporate them to their repertoire of Japanese cultural activities as a way of channeling young people interest in the knowledge of the language or other Japanese cultural expressions.[62]

It is in this setting that the Japanese-Chilean community needed to take a stance on Japanese pop culture, an area that few were acquainted with. In my interviews, it becomes evident that it was a struggle for many, as they felt they were betraying Japan and themselves by accepting manga, anime, and J-music as a valid cultural expression, but had no other choice if they wanted to remain relevant to the definition of Japanese

[61] See, for example, a discussion in *El Sabado* magazine on the promotion of violence and sexual ambiguity in children through Japanese animations. Ximena Torres Cautivo, "Dragon Ball al banquillo. Acusadores y defensores se enfrentan," *El Sabado*, October 17, 1998, 77-80.
[62] Instituto Cultural Chileno-Japonés, "Cursos de Manga," http://www.japones.cl/?q=manga.html

culture in Chilean eyes.

While they know that this pop culture is part of Japanese reality, they are seen as unimportant or not culture at all, despite their arguably being cultural practices according to social studies definitions, for example sociologist Clifford Geertz's. He defined 'culture' as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life."[63] However, the interviewees did not, in the most part, apply such an encompassing definition to Japanese culture, a distinction that became evident in their differentiation of 'proper culture' and 'popular culture.'

Popular culture has a myriad of definitions that British cultural studies theoretician John Storey explores in his book *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Among them, one in particular fits the image that my interviewees had of Japanese popular culture. He writes that it is possible "(...) to suggest that it is the culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture. Popular culture, in this definition, is a residual category, there to accommodate cultural texts and practices which fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture. In other words, it is a definition of popular culture as substandard culture."[64]

When I talked to both people from older generations and those whose link to Japan itself is from earlier in the past century, I found reticence to accept Japanese pop culture as a proper expression of Japanese characteristics, or as culture at all. While more

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[63] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a cultural system," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), 3.
[64] John Storey, *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 7.

exposition to the media can be beneficial, particularly the rising interest in the activities that cultural organizations have to offer, it can also bring unwanted stereotypes into the picture. Along with the positive preconceptions that he mentioned to me, Makoto also pointed out that he has had people tell him that they associate Japanese people, and men in particular, with sexual deviance in the form of pedophilia, and to strange and 'cruel' cultural practices, such as the eating of whale meat.[65] The mention of pedophilia can be linked to the depictions of sexuality and gender in anime broadcast by national television, but also to sporadic media coverage of the Japanese adult entertainment industry, particularly pornographic anime and manga.

The stark difference in the perception of popular culture by Chilean *nikkei* that have spent a considerable amount of time living in Japan and those who have not can be understood by what Takie Lebra, citing A.F.C. Wallace, calls the "organization of diversity."[66] She believes that individuality and conformity to highly structured societal norms are not mutually exclusive, and even beneficial in the long term. She asserts that:

> It follows that individuals, each being unique, nonetheless have overlapping orientations. Logically related to this argument is that the individual system and cultural system are not completely discrete but are partially overlapping sets. (...) Indeed it is not necessary, desirable, or possible for Ego to share the whole repertoire of behavior and attributes even with one. (...) Culture, then, may be conceived as a total complex of "partial overlaps" of orientations among individuals cognitive and evaluative at various levels of generality.[67]

In this way, things such as the Japanese adult entertainment industry, anime, and J-rock can coexist with cohesive social practices without being seen as a threat to the Japanese way of life, with the exception, of course, when these areas disturb the social

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[65] Oral interview with the author, June, 2013.
[66] Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Culture and Personality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1970), 22-24, quoted in Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), 248.
[67] Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*, 249-250.

order, as was the case with the so-called *Otaku*[68] Murderer between 1988 and 1989, a serial killer from Saitama Prefecture who was given the epithet by the media during his trial due to his personal collection of pornography, anime, and horror/slasher films. This corresponds with another account from the last interview I have referenced, in which Makoto told me about the reaction he got one day in Japan when he came out of the house with his tie undone and his hair not yet combed because he had woken up late. The reaction of one of his neighbors was not a preoccupation with his bad appearance, but he said, "Oh, you must be trying on a new style!"[69]

However, to Japanese-Chileans, whose ethnic identity and group cohesion is not as stable, seemingly less respectable aspects of Japanese society like pornography and sexual ambiguity are seen as a threat to an image they have had to carefully craft for themselves. Not only is it a danger to the public image of 'the Japanese' even if the Japanese government itself has latched onto these new trends with initiatives such as the *Kawaii* Ambassadors.[70] It is also perceived as an insult to groups and individuals that have been working on building up this image for a long time, and feel like their knowledge has been replaced by younger generations who, generally, are not even of Japanese descent.

I believe this is due to their own notion of what culture is. To most of my informants, culture seems to be a static set of practices that they associate with their identity and Japan in general. It is also connected to a particular setting, that of the Meiji Era (1868-1912) in which Japan was envisioned as a modern nation-state and certain

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[68] A geek or enthusiast.
[69] Oral interview with the author, June, 2013.
[70] Web Japan, "The Kawaii Ambassadors (Ambassadors of Cuteness)," October 27, 2009, http://web-japan.org/trends/09_culture/pop090827.html

practices were privileged over others as representing the national spirit, particularly those of the elites.[71]

Teacher Megumi commented on how it has taken her years to admit that Japanese manga and anime are a legitimate link to student's interest in the Japanese language. Before, she used to get disappointed by the fact that so many of her students had started their interest with anime, instead of other topics such as business or fine art. She said that, after getting used to the same Japanese cultural organizations that she was associated with advertising Japan through manga and anime, she could, perhaps, take these expressions as culture, although always at a lower level than other art forms.

When I asked her husband Francisco, who is in his 60s and is the son of a Japanese man and a Chilean woman, what he felt about anime fans reaching out to the Japanese-Chilean community, he gave me his own experience as an answer. He said that when interest in anime and manga began to emerge in the 1990s, Chilean teenagers had indeed attempted to expand their knowledge of Japan through organizations like the Asociacion Nikkei de Valparaiso, but that it had been the Japanese-Chileans who had pulled away, rejecting anime and man*g*a as not being properly Japanese, leading anime fans to look for information elsewhere. He added that perhaps this was one of the reasons that there was a gap between the older generation of *nikkeijin* and young people, and that he thought that these anime fans actually knew more about the Japan of today than he did. For him and his acquaintances, manga and anime were unknown topics, usually controversial and associated with sexual deviance. He regretted not having listened to them and informed himself on their interests, as now he feels disconnected from the

[71] For a study of the reincorporation of certain supernatural beliefs during the Meiji period as 'traditional,' see Gerald Figal, *Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

younger generations.

When I asked the same question to Ayako, her attitude reflected the one that my male interviewee had had in the past, even if she is much younger. She looked at *otaku* subculture with suspicion; the dramatic, overdone look of *visual kei*[72] music performers and their fans (one of the biggest aspects of Japanese pop culture in Chile) had little to do with what her grandmother had taught her about Japan, or with what authors like Lebra identified as Japanese aesthetic sensibilities in the 1970s. She did not feel that they were interested in other areas of Japanese culture, and that she believed it to be a passing fad. She finished her explanation by telling me that in Chile, in general, "they tend to turn anything into something superficial."[73]

I believe that her perception and its similarities to those of Francisco, despite their age differences, stem from the era in which the first Japanese immigrants from their family arrived in Chile and from how recent their own relationship with Japan has been. Both of them, and Megumi as well, have ideas of what constitutes Japanese culture that are heavily influenced by the Meiji period's identification of elite cultural practices with national identity. Therefore, the generational gap between informants seems to be less important than the timing of their first contact with what they deemed to be authentic Japanese culture.

Other people from younger generations that have been in contact with Japan recently have a different perspective, closer to the acceptance of diversion from norms that Lebra mentions. While they do find it strange that Chilean people would be so familiar with Japanese pop culture, they believe it is a gateway to knowing Japan.

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[72] 'Visual system/style', a trend among Japanese musicians that focuses on elaborate stage presences and sometimes involves males playing a female persona.
[73] Oral interview with the author, June, 2013.

Japanese teacher Asami said that it truly made her happy that people knew about Japan, whatever their motivation was.[74] Reiko also said that, in her experience as a Japanese teacher, Chileans' familiarity with anime was good for language acquisition, and people came to class more prepared and with better listening abilities than they did a decade ago. Finally, Makoto, who is deeply involved in cultural organizations, explained to me that he felt that if Japanese-Chileans did not start respecting these cultural forms and becoming a source of information to Chileans on these topics, they would lose their relevance in an age when everything was accessible through the internet.[75]

In this case, it is a complicated decision between upholding the limits that define their group and allowing new elements to enter that could blur these lines. This is all the more so as they are not as knowledgeable about the things that Chilean youth have come to associate with Japan and it would imply giving more authority to people that did not used to be part of the group. It would involve a reconsideration of their concept of culture as a whole, and the ceding of their arbitrage of taste to some who are not ethnically Japanese.

[74] Oral interview with the author, May, 2013.
[75] Oral interview with the author, June, 2013.

CONCLUSION

The identity of Japanese-Chileans, and what they themselves identify as Japanese culture, has changed very little from the mid-twentieth century onwards, as can be attested from publications and from the conversations I had with some members of the community. In their case, and perhaps due to the strong national component of their ethnicity, this depends on a static vision of culture that is attached to the image of Japan as a nation-state. Given that the language was lost usually after the second generation, and that the Japanese-Chilean population is too scattered to share commemorative dates and festivities, their identity is protected by the preservation of certain behaviors that are believed to be Japanese, in contrast with those considered to be Chilean.

For the earlier immigrants to Chile, most of whom were men, being Japanese in the eyes of Chileans was connected to their labor style and some of their perceived qualities such as honesty and industriousness. With time, it has become the basis for their identity that has been transmitted from generation to generation and extended with the narrative accounts given in academic publications. These notions, which at some point cemented their position as good employees, have been kept until today without much criticism. Indeed, the image of the hardworking *salaryman* has perhaps been intensified, even if there have been new, and negative, elements added.

In the case of women, although a minority of the first generation population, their behavior is seen as unique not only by themselves but also by outsiders. Among those

that I interviewed, women had a high level of internal conflict due to the role they believed they had to play as Japanese, and the way they perceived their stay in Chile was changing them. Subtlety and refinement are believed to be essential components of all Japanese women, regardless of class differences in the country itself, and therefore are preserved as part of their identity.

The Japanese community in Chile has crafted an image of themselves that they hold dear as it has helped them find their niche in Chilean society. It was based on national ideas of what the core culture of the Japanese nation is, mostly elaborated during the Meiji period, and they have until very recently remained undisputed arbiters of Japanese culture in Chile. Their stories of immigration as told over generations do not reflect failure; they were humble, hard-working people that only added to Chile's development. And, most importantly, they never attempted to snatch Chileans' positions or to rise to a social level that could be seen as a threat.

It is interesting to find that, to this day, these Japanese descendants have taken personal responsibility to uphold 'authentically Japanese' cultural forms that would most likely not only have been distant to the living conditions of their ancestors in Japan but also financially unattainable. Moreover, the disruption of their cultural authority by nonethnic Japanese, regardless of the fact that such non-Japanese are usually more up to date with current cultural trends in Japan, highlights the underlying notion that culture is essentially biologically transmitted. In this mindset, those who are ethnically Japanese, however many generations removed from the original immigrants, would always have more authority than others to dictate what Japanese culture is.

All these ideas and their emotional importance to each Japanese-Chilean

individual is what is at stake when new actors claim to know a different Japan. Not only is their exclusive right to define Japanese culture to the Chilean public challenged, but also the power that they had before to define themselves as Japanese-Chileans without contradiction. The different ideas of what culture is, or its capacity to change through time, is essential to understanding why there seems to be such a disconnect between what individual Japanese-Chileans and academic publications perceive as being Japanese and what newer immigrants and Chilean youth are interested in and have managed to import through other channels.

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